Great Britain & Ireland



# A SPEECH Upon the STATE Of the NATION,

In *April* 1701.

*Gentlemen,*

IT *seems at first view hard to determine, whether you would be more oblig'd to one who should perſuade you of the miſerable and irretrievable Condition, into which you are precipitating your ſelves, and the reſt of Europe; or to him, who after you are convinc'd, ſhould ſhow you how to eſcape. But as it is a much more difficult*

*Work to convince you of the true State of your Affairs; so it seems to have this advantage, that when you know your Danger, the frightful and terrible Circumstances of your present Condition will certainly make you improve every Opportunity, and lay hold upon every thing that may in the least contribute to save you: and this will be the more easy for you to do, since such Means are now in your power, as could hardly be expected on the like occasion; and which, if you neglect, you have resolv'd your own Ruin. You were formerly convinc'd, that the French King was a dangerous Neighbour, powerful and vigilant; that there was no end of his Designs, no relying on his Treaties; that he could corrupt not only those who under your Princes had the Management of Publick Affairs, but even your Princes themselves. The least Increase of his Power at Sea, every inconsiderable Fort taken by him in Flanders, alarum'd you in the highest degree. You were jealous of his secret Treaties with your Princes, and so industrious, that you discover'd one, in which the Abolition of Parliaments, and Suppression*

*of your Liberties were expreſly ſtipulated; provided England would remain his Ally, and not oppoſe the Deſigns he had form'd againſt the Houſe of Auſtria, and the reſt of Europe. You were then alarum'd that no care was taken of the Proteſtant Religion abroad, and began from thence, and the Debaucheries of your Princes, to ſuſpect them of inclining to a Religion that allows Men to live ill, and conſecrates the Arbitrary Power of Kings. But now, as if there were not the leaſt Ground to ſuſpect any of theſe things, you are very eaſy: You concur with the Deſigns of France and the Court, in every thing. France is too powerful to be oppos'd; you are too poor, and too much in Debt to make War. Yet France has ſeiz'd the whole Spaniſh Monarchy; and, if ſuffer'd to enjoy it quietly, he who formerly was able to oppoſe, may hereafter trample on the reſt of Mankind. 'Tis no longer Conde, Linck, and the Sluices of Nieuport he pretends: His Troops fill Bruſſels, Antwerp, and the Spaniſh Gelderland. Oſtend and Nieuport are by our good Conduct added to Dunkirk, in order to receive his Royal*

Fleets, and harbour his Pirates, who are to enrich themselves with the Ruin of our Trade. In this State of things you are for preserving the Peace of Europe; which would be yet much better secur'd by your Slavery. When King Charles the 2d went to Dover, and the French King came to Calais, Gallantry and Diversion seem'd to be the only Business of the two Courts. 'Twas not then and in those places publickly known that there was a secret Treaty, yet you not only suspected one, but the Design and Intention of it also; and your Suspicions were found to be well grounded. Now tho two great Armies have been Witnesses that the Marechal de Boufflers and Earl of Portland were for several Days imploy'd in making a Treaty (and sure 'twas a secret one, since none of you yet know what it was) you have not to this day taken the least notice of it. But can any Man suspect the Minister of a Prince, who is said to have rejected a Crown, and that of no contemptible Country, by refusing to join in that very Treaty of Dover? Can he, that in a private Condition resisted the Arts of France, be supposed, now he is Master of

three

three Kingdoms, and of a powerful State, to riſque them all at once, and yield to thoſe Arts he before deſpis'd? To this, whatever other Anſwer I could give, I ſhall only ſay at preſent that we have always but too juſt ground to ſuſpect all ſecret and cloſe Negotiations with France. But it ſeems you thought it not worth your Inquiry, whether theſe Negotiations were for your Advantage or Ruin. You will ſay, what ground was there of Suſpicion? For nothing appear'd. I ſay, that of all others was the greateſt. But who was it, that firſt as commiſſionated, and after as Ambaſſadour, was employ'd to treat? Was he an Engliſh-man? And how were the Plenipotentiaries of this Nation uſed at the formal Treaty? Were they not as Pageants brought in to attend the Show? or as ſo many Cyphers, that without the Dutch men, who made the figure, could ſignify nothing? Yet this advantage we had, that the King having not been own'd till the Concluſion of the Treaty, the abandoning of the Proteſtant Religion at Reſwick, cannot with any colour of Juſtice be imputed to Engliſh Miniſters, but only to

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*the Plenipotentiaries of Holland: And you could not by any means conceive or entertain the least Suspicion of indirect Dealing in the private Treaty when you saw your selves and your Religion so fairly dealt with in that which was publick. Yet methinks, the abandoning of our antient Allies, and entring into the closest and most intire Correspondence with France that has ever been seen between the two Courts, ought to have mov'd you a little, and made you doubtful that a Bargain was struck, unless you can think France uncapable of entring into any that may be to your Disadvantage. Here indeed I know not what to say for you: and the best Account I can give of your careless Indifference, must be to set before you your present Condition; which yet I fear will both offend and terrify you; I wish it may not throw you into Despair. But such Distempers are only to be cur'd by violent Remedies: And I had rather venture your Displeasure in doing my Duty, than obtain the Friendship of your Enemies by omitting it. 'Tis then thus. The English Nation have now nothing remain-*

*ing but the outward Appearance and Carcase, as I may call it, of their antient Constitution. The Spirit and Soul is fled. Jealousy for publick Liberty is vanish'd. The Court has so often renew'd the same Arts, Methods and Counsels, and so often made Trial of the several Parties in the Kingdom, as well as of the Alliance of France, in order to compass their Ends, that the Nation begins to grow weary of opposing the same things, and very wisely thinks there can be no Danger of such Attempts as have so often fail'd. Besides, you are grown weary of that old and antiquated Care and Concernment for the Publick: Or at least have given it a new and better turn. Some of you improving your Morals, which are so necessary for the Preservation of Liberty, in constant gaming; as others do their Politicks and Skill in Military matters by laying Wagers. And even Stock-jobbing makes you deeply concern'd for the Publick Affairs. Long Sessions of Parliament furnish great Opportunities of knowing the Interests of the several Parties; by which you must needs know*

know that of the Nation, ſince the Nation is made up of Parties. And the Court by frequent ſhifting from one Party to another, has forc'd you to double your Attendance upon them. So that as well thoſe who are at this time to go off the Guard, as thoſe who are coming on, being equally willing, the one to continue, and the other to enter upon Duty, the Court craftily keeps both Parties under Arms, whilſt the Country has nothing to truſt to, but a weak, unpaid and diſorderly Militia Party. And now I think I have ſufficiently ſhown the Cauſes of your preſent Indifference; ſince having ſo much buſineſs at home, you can hardly attend to what is doing abroad. Yet one would think that a certain Affair tranſacted abroad, in which your Miniſters are ſaid to have had no ſmall part, and which has made ſo great a noiſe in the World, might deſerve a little Conſideration, and oblige you to make ſome Reflection upon the Motives of that Undertaking. Eſpecially ſince it is of ſo extraordinary a Nature, as to be the firſt of the kind, and like to prove of ſuch Conſequence;

*ſequence, as may involve the World in Troubles and Calamities, which perhaps may be of equal Duration with its Frame. And tho, as a prodigious Comet, it has alarum'd the reſt of the World, you did not ſee it till of late, and 'tis already vaniſhed by the ſhutting of your Eyes. As to what it may portend, you think it as fooliſh to enquire, as wiſe Men do to attend the Dreams of Aſtrologers. In this I wiſh I could defend you; but that being utterly impoſſible, there remains nothing to be done, except only charitably to undeceive you, and ſhew, if you had time to ſpare from your great Application to maintain the Intereſts of your ſeveral Parties, what Conſequences you muſt neceſſarily draw from things you all know and acknowledg. By this time you ſee 'tis the Partition-Treaty I mean. I ſay then that from the firſt Appearance of that Treaty, it was not only evident, but foretold by thouſands even of the moſt ordinary Capacity, that it would unavoidably throw the whole Spaniſh Monarchy into the Houſe of Bourbon If ſome Men of more penetration did happen ſo far to refine, as to put*

*any other Conſtruction upon the Treaty, it only proceeded from a charitable Opinion they had taken up, that the Deſign could not be ſo black, as it has ſince appear'd by the Conduct of moſt of the Partitioners, ever ſince the Death of the King of Spain: which has demonſtrated to the World with what Intention it was made. The Letter of this Treaty tells us of preſerving the Peace of Europe by diſmembring the Spaniſh Monarchy; but the Spirit throws it intire into the Family of Bourbon, intails an endleſs War upon Chriſtendom, breaks the Balance, which has preſerv'd its Liberty for 200 Years, and will conſequently baniſh all Remains of Freedom both Civil and Religious from among Men. This Treaty like an Alarum-Bell rung over all Europe: Pray God it may not prove to you a Paſſing-Bell. Poor helpleſs Spain, rather than divide the Child, choſe to give it intire to the Harlot, to whom it did not belong. And ſhe has got it; for the Solomon who commanded to divide the Child, did it not in order to do Juſtice. Inſtead of the Preſervation of the Peace of Europe (for no*

*great*

*great Miſchief was ever deſigned, but Piety was ſtill pretended) Europe muſt from this time be either in a Poſture of War, and ſo conſum'd by Taxes; or in actual War, waſted by Bloodſhed and Rapine, till ſhe be forc'd to hold out her Hands to the Shackles, and ſubmit to a worſe Condition. Theſe are the glorious Works of ſuch Governours as the World thinks they cannot be without; perhaps too truly: I mean thoſe who are to execute God's Judgments upon them. 'Tis evident a Treaty was made, which if it had taken effect even in the plain meaning of the Words, had broken the Ballance of Europe, and deſtroy'd your Trade in the Mediterranean, under the plauſible pretence of avoiding a greater Evil, into which it was contriv'd to throw you. Yet after all, you are poſitively reſolv'd to rely upon the Faith of thoſe who contrived and concerted this, and obſtinately bent to continue in Peace, when the reſt of Europe are to make the laſt puſh for their Liberty. As thoſe who are mark'd out for Ruin, are firſt bereft of Underſtanding; ſo you who ſee nothing but ſham upon ſham play'd upon*

*you, ſeem to be altogether uncapable of making the leaſt Reflection to what end they are deſign'd.*

*You plainly ſee that thoſe who have the direction of your Affairs, have broken the Balance of Europe, and deliver'd a great part of the World into the Hands of France. Yet to this hour it cannot enter into your Heads that this was done for any end, nor can you allow it the leaſt Reflection. 'Tis true, Wiſe Men love not to determine ſuddenly: You take yet a ſurer way not to miſtake in your Determination, which is, not to think. 'Tis commonly ſaid, that in this World nothing is to be had for nothing: But you make no doubt, that almoſt one half of the World may be given for nothing. The Proverb I own is meant of Money, and of private Perſons: but you are of Opinion, that Princes may be more diſintereſted, and leſs wiſe; or at leaſt, that 'tis not much your buſineſs to enquire whether it be ſo or not. Beſides, there is nothing to direct you in an Enquiry touching this whole Affair, there being no manner of reſemblance between this Treaty and*

*that*

*that of Dover. For though the French King was a Party concern'd in both; yet he is now grown old, and would willingly, if you permit, paſs the reſt of his Days in Peace, and only apply himſelf to redreſs the Diſorders, and reſtore the Vigour of the Spaniſh Monarchy. The Condition of the Dutch is much alter'd ſince the Dover Treaty; for then they were Partition'd, but now they are riſen to the Quality of Partitioners. And we are in abſolute Security that nothing can be ſtipulated to our prejudice, ſince he who then glorioufly refuſing a Crown, broke the Meaſures of King Charles and of France, now Treats for us, and remains ſtill as generouſly diſintereſted as ever, no advantage appearing to accrue by the Treaty either to him or his. So that the Dover Treaty affording no light at all in this Affair, it ſtill remains an impenetrable Myſtery, why France is allow'd ſo many rich Provinces in Poſſeſſion, and ſo many in Reverſion. For if the Duke of Anjou be any more than a Vice-Roy, 'tis in the Power of his Grandfather to make him leſs, and diſpoſe of him and his*

*Do-*

*Dominions at his pleaſure. But I have found the Secret. You will ſay, Pray what is it? What you might have found out as well as I, if you had any goodneſs in you. 'Twas the pious Deſign of preſerving the Peace of Europe, on which you ſee the whole Treaty is founded. You will anſwer; All the World knows this as well as you. Ay; but you don't ſufficiently reflect upon the eminent degree of that Piety, ſo clearly demonſtraced in a perfect reſignation of all that the World calls Honour and Security, in order to continue the Peace and Quiet of the poor People of Europe. This was the thing that made us firſt ſacrifice the Balance of Chriſtendom, together with a conſiderable part of our Trade. After which, when, by the perfidiouſneſs of our New Allies, this Treaty, that had coſt us ſuch a Sacrifice to obtain, was impudently broken to the ruin of the Balance, and putting our ſelves and Antient Allies into the moſt imminent dangers, we took ſo high an affront, ſo irreparable an Injury with ſuch an abſolute Reſignation, and exemplary Patience, as neither by*

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*Word or Deed to ſhew the leaſt mark of reſentment. But like true Chriſtians, that we might do good to thoſe who uſed us deſpitefully, and by ways of meekneſs and condeſcenſion, bring them back to a ſenſe of what they owe to us, we delay'd the calling of the great Council of the Nation, till they had ſent the New King to his Kingdom, and put themſelves into a Poſture of ſeizing Milan and Flanders, which they have ſince effected. And now we are ſo moderate, to ask only a moſt inconſiderable or rather ridiculous Security; perhaps becauſe the French King is now become more ſolvent. Truly, if we deſign not to enter into a War, we need not be nice upon any Security; for all Securities are alike, if France be permitted to increaſe in Power. As to the Security of a Fleet, I ſay, That a People, who are reſolved to have Peace with their Neighbours, at a time when 'tis highly the Intereſt of their Neighbours to keep Peace with them, ſtand not in need of a Fleet, unleſs it be to make a War of Taxes upon themſelves. And if the Enemy contrary to his preſent Intereſt, ſhould*

*unite*

*unite his whole Sea-force to attack us, ſuch a Fleet as we are now ſetting out, is exactly calculated to receive damage and affront. But Peace, Cautionary Towns, and Moderate Fleets will ſecure our Trade, till we have freed our ſelves from Debt, and are grown ſo rich, that we can make War when we pleaſe. That is, after our Enemies ſhall have diſabled all thoſe that we may now have for our Allies, and be at leiſure to deal with us alone. The Honour indeed will be great to be ſingle in the Attack, againſt a Power that has baffled the reſt of the World: But I fear the danger will be no leſs; for they always go Hand in Hand. You'll ask perhaps, What one would have the Nation do? Both Houſes have damn'd the Treaty; and ſome conſiderable Men may poſſibly be puniſhed for it. I know there is yet more done: for by excuſing the late Chancellor, the blame is thrown upon the King, ſince in all Free Governments, ſome body muſt be anſwerable for whatever is done with relation to the Publick. But hitherto nothing has been ſo much as thought of to rettrieve us from*

*that*

*that Ruin, into which the Treaty throws us. This is that, which one might justly expect from the Nation; and not that they should content themselves with railing at the Treaty, whilst they are allowing and concurring in the Execution of the real and pernicious design of it. Some will say: Let the Emperor and the Dutch be Principals in this War; we who formerly were at the greatest Expence in opposing France, will now be Accessaries, and come in when we think fit. It would seem by this Reasoning, that the Power of France is diminished, and that you can overtake the growth of it when you please. Who told you that the Dutch, if they find themselves abandon'd by you now, will not for the sake of their Trade resolve to have Peace at any rate? If the Emperor be abandon'd by both, is not the business at an end? What business? All Opposition, by which the French may be hindred from bringing the Affairs of Spain into Order, and uniting those vast Dominions to their Empire. And this naturally leads me again to consider what return may be expected for the Contrivance and*

Execution of a Treaty so infinitely advantageous to France. For whatever I have said before of a certain Pious design; I fear I shall hardly persuade this wicked Age of it. And though the Heathens thought Vertue a sufficient Reward for it self; yet the Christian Religion with more Truth and Solidity has accompanied it with other Advantages. If then the Dominions accruing to France by this Treaty, may justly be accounted the greatest that ever were procured for any Nation, the returns ought certainly to be the greatest that can be made; or such as the Benefactor puts the highest value upon. You'll say 'tis hard to judge of them: And that if I would insinuate any thing by the mention I made of the Dover Treaty, the Insinuation is ridiculous in a weakly Man, without any probability of Issue. I answer, If there should be such a tendency, I hope you do not take it for a vertuous Inclination, and consequently ought to judge of it by the temper of the Person, and the unreasonableness of every vicious disorder of the Mind. No well-natur'd, generous, unthinking People, can ever penetrate

netrate the Thoughts of a designing Man. Does not an old Miser, even though he want Issue, increase in Covetousness to the last hour of his Life? Is Ambition a less Passion than Avarice? Is not the Conquest of Free Men more noble than that of Slaves? Did ever any Heroe refuse to die in a great Battel in which Kingdoms and powerful States were to fall with him, and serve for Trophies to his Herse? But I will shew you the Thing in another view, which perhaps will suite better with your Temper and Disposition. You all say, every Prince would be absolute: And this Inclination you think so agreeable to the Nature of Man, that no one can be without it. And indeed it would be strange you should trust them with so much Power, under the greatest Temptations of employing it that way, if you thought it a great Crime to do so. Besides, 'tis not their Interest to use Arbitrary Power cruelly. And you do not know what Condition, a Prince, who in order to good Designs should obtain it, might at his Death leave you: perhaps in

greater Liberty than you ever enjoy'd. If then pursuant to these or the like thoughts his M—— should have judg'd that the Monarchy of Spain will prove a burden to the French, and rather weaken than strengthen them by exhausting their Treasures and Men in defending and repeopling those Countries; If he should have consider'd, that nothing can so effectually oppose the great and growing Power of France, as the United and Neighbouring Force of England and Holland; Countries abounding in People, Riches, and store of Shipping; provided that Force were upon a right foot, as well in respect to Secrecy as the Unanimity of Counsel and Command, flowing from an unjarring Direction, not subject to the Storms of a H—— of C—— or the Capricio's of a Free People, little conversant in Foreign Affairs; (which you will allow to be a very Natural Thought in a Prince.) I say, if upon these Considerations, The K—— seeing the Confederacy falling to pieces, and open Force ineffectual, proposed to himself, in order to obtain an advantageous Peace, and lay a

sure

*ſure Foundation for the Deſtruction of France, to blind them with the Ruinous Fantom of Spain, and promiſe to enter into any Meaſures they ſhould propoſe, in order to deliver it to them, in caſe they would aſſiſt him to eſtabliſh himſelf both here and in Holland. Was this Deſign ſo Criminal? Or could France do leſs for ſuch a Benefactor? I am afraid, I have put ſuch a Maſk of Innocence on this Affair, that you will begin to like it. And in an Age, when Diviſions and Exchanges of Countries are ſo frequently mention'd, who knows, whether the Agreement may not be, to Unite the whole Seventeen Provinces to the Crown of England, and in lieu of them to give the Kingdom of Portugal to Spain, which is a Country as much more convenient for Spain than Flanders, as acceſſion of Strength is more advantageous than Ruin. What a Glorious Government would the Three Kingdoms and the Seventeen Provinces be? Might they not, when United under one Wiſe and Abſolute Prince (for People of ſuch different Tempers, and ſo emulous of each other in Trade, ſeem ne-*

*neſſa-*

ceſſarily to require it) bid defiance not only to France, but to the World? Might they not for ever eſtabliſh in themſelves the Empire of the Sea, with an intire Monopoly of Trade; eſpecially if it ſhould pleaſe him to Crown all his other Actions, by leaving them poſſeſs'd of ſuch Immunities as might ſecure the continuation of their Trade for ever? Is there, after all, ſuch a probable way of reſiſting the Power of France? Or is it not the only way of ſaving both us and our Religion, which is our main Concern? For being Men of Underſtanding, I reſolve to leave it thus with you, tho you ſhould think me a Courtier. For according to the Judgment you ſhall make of what I have ſaid, it will appear, whether it be poſſible to ſave you or not, and conſequently whether it be to any purpoſe to give you or my ſelf any farther trouble.

Τύραννος ἐων, τυραννίδα οὐκ ἀπεργάζεται.

Herodot. Urania. 23 AP 57

FINIS.